

Ve.Schheft



Spezialausgabe, Nr. 10

Die ‚Freie Sammlung Wien‘ ist eine wirtschaftliche künstlerische Konstruktion und basiert auf der Grundidee, dass angefragte Künstlerinnen und Künstler ihr Einverständnis geben, mit ausgesuchter Arbeit Teil der Sammlung zu werden. Die Transaktion passiert ohne Geldfluss, die Werke sind grundsätzlich an die Sammlung gebunden, der Anteil bleibt zu 70% bei den KünstlerInnen. Zu den Aufgaben der Sammlung zählen Verwaltung, Vermittlung, Archivierung & Kontext. Der Kunstverein Ve.Sch wird mehrmals pro Jahr Repräsentationsort für die ‚Freie Sammlung Wien‘ sein. Text: Martin Vesely

p3&4.: **Nataša Bodrožić** for VeSchheft (2012): Interview with **ARTLEAKS**. Graphics by **Zampa di Leone**

Nataša Bodrožić is curator and cultural worker based in Zagreb.

She is the member of Slobodne veze/Loose Associations: <http://slobodneveze.wordpress.com>

p5.: Freie Sammlung Wien #1: **Mads Westrup** ‚Untitled/Det stadig sør'ligt, det så mange minder som bar' fosvinder' 270x240 cm, Oil on canvas, December - 2011, Semperdepot - Lehargasse 6 1060 Vienna.

1984 – Copenhagen, Denmark

Akbild – Expanded Pictorial Space (start 2009)

Exhibitions

2012 ‚Two GB's' – With Kris Lemsalu – HHDM – Vienna

‚Swing Journal' – With Nazim Yilmaz & Adrian Buschmann – Beaver Projects – Copenhagen

2011 Matisse (Solo) – Hello Vietnam – Vienna, Austria

2010 Look Twice (Group) – Färgfabriken Norr – Östersund, Sweden

2008 Tuder & Høvding (Solo) – Byens Kro – Copenhagen, Denmark

www.madswestrup.at

p6.: Freie Sammlung Wien #2: Mads Westrup ‚Untitled/2000 und was?' 60x90 cm, Oil on canvas, February 2012, Semperdepot - Lehargasse 6 1060 Vienna.

p7.: ‚Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit'

p8.: **Robert Müller** ‚Gelesen in den Apokryphen von Tiquun'

p9.: 100 Schilling Schein:

Ausgabe 5.12.1927

Einziehung 15.5.1938

Wiederauflage nach dem 2. Weltkrieg

Ausgabe 13.12.1945

Einzug 30.4.1948

Entwurf Wilhelm Dachauer

Quelle: Österreichische Nationalbank

p10.: Freie Sammlung Wien #3: Mads Westrup ‚Untitled/Untitled' 80x55 cm, Oil on canvas, ? - 2011 - Semperdepot - Lehargasse 6 1060 Vienna.

p11.: Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj, 500000000000 Yugoslavian Dinar (1993)

Ozone Depletion, 100 Antarctic Dollars (2001)

p12.: Freie Sammlung Wien #4: Mads Westrup ‚Untitled/If these walls could talk, the probably still ignore you' 145x105 cm, Oil on canvas, March - 2012, Semperdepot - Lehargasse 6 1060 Vienna

ArtLeaks is a collective platform initiated by an international group of artists, curators, art historians and intellectuals in response to the abuse of their professional integrity and the open infraction of their labour rights. In the art world, such abuses usually disappear, but some events bring them into sharp focus and therefore deserve public scrutiny. Our project was born out of a particular situation of conflict with Pavilion UniCredit a contemporary art centre in Bucharest, Romania. Over the course of 2 years (2009-2011) the core members of ArtLeaks collected evidence of several instances when this centre acted against the interests of the workers and public it pretends to serve – and considered it our civic and political responsibility to not let these accounts be suppressed but subject them to public scrutiny.

Our initial protest led to larger discussions that made us realize that we are not only dealing with a particular case of abuse and infringement of cultural workers' rights (not just artists but also curators and critics are usually involved) but general conditions of inequality, precarity, abuse that affect all of us, whether you're an artist or critic in Romania or working in the field of culture in France, Italy, Russia or the United States. All of us had experienced and vocalized protests against the pervasive corporatization of contemporary art and culture, the accumulation of cultural capital by banks or foundations through the labour of cultural workers that are not compensated in return – and what is more troubling the suppression of any kind of debate around these conditions of exploitation and the politics of corporate sponsorship.

More about us here: <http://art-leaks.org/about>

- In the text on the web site: <http://art-leaks.org/> you state that one of your main goals is to stand against open infraction (of cultural workers') labor rights. Given that the remuneration to the artist for his labour imposes as one of the main questions that initiate reflection and criticism of the functioning of the entire system of art, I am interested in- what model does ArtLeaks consider/find adequate in the case when an organization/off space/curator who employs/invites an artist is also dependent on public funding that (in many cases) does not foresee ARTIST'S FEE as a budget line. In short, how to deal with the situation when both curator/organization and artist are precarious workers and only curator/organizer gets (anyway) insufficient remuneration for his/her work by the public fund?

David Riff: The question you describe is very common. Legislations and practices with regard to artist's fees vary from country to country, and in an increasingly precarious world, curators are very lucky if they can pay a fee or keep their promises as to payment. Symptomatically, requests by artists for payment are usually followed by silence. From the curatorial side, it's a cause for much agony. Under those circumstances, we can say quite clearly: curators who use public-private funding and political agendas to self-aggrandize without ever foreseeing a fee are bastards. Especially while others are forking out their own hardearned money to save underfunded projects. It sometimes happens under those circumstances that you can't pay or don't get paid. And then? Could this be the end of a beautiful friendship? It always depends, and we

cannot give you the perfect solution under such variable conditions. How to organize? Any initiative today must include not only artists, but also curators and other lesser "reproductive" workers in the art system, and must articulate demands for all agents involved. But most importantly, there must be an understanding that things are appalling and they could be different and that only pressure exerted together will help, if curators are not villified but included in the discussion. There must be solidarity when the museum workers realize that they are getting paid more than the artists, and our goal would be to find a base for that, a language to talk about common problems. We hope that ArtLeaks will be a platform where we can develop such an idiom.

- We all probably agree that such a practice (public budgets not supporting ARTIST FEE) is intollerable, but many of us still are in such a system and work within this framework. Naturally, we are finding different ways to solve the problem of artists' fees (often semi-legally-making minor misdemeanors, but referring to the legitimacy of such actions). What is ArtLeaks attitude in the framework of the situation we have now? (A strike :)?

Vladan Jeremić: One of our ideas is to formulate public demands through a Union of precarious workers. We believe that is not so easy to organize public pressure through NGOs, as they can be very easily corrupted by neoliberal politicians, not to mention the fact that NGOs often adopt atomised strategies, which fail to address the systemic exploitation which you mentioned. We think that a Cultural Workers and Artists Union of precarious workers can formulate relevant standards and exert international pressure - with the help of ArtLeaks' online campaigns and public visits and assemblies. This strategy may help when dealing both with local contexts and linking these struggles from a geopolitical dimension of political and economic relations.

- Many artists are dealing with the above mentioned issue, in different ways. For example, as a reaction to the impossibility to get her honorarium through Croatian public funding channels, Zagreb based artist Tonka Malekovic started a doorway gallery- a space to provoke transient, non lasting form/practice. She did it in collaboration with a dance center which invests some money in the project. Artists are invited to intervene following the logic of maximum performance through minimum (production) input, in the material sense - to reflect the realization of as minimal, as ecological, as ephemeral work possible. By switching hierarchy (determined by the public funds):

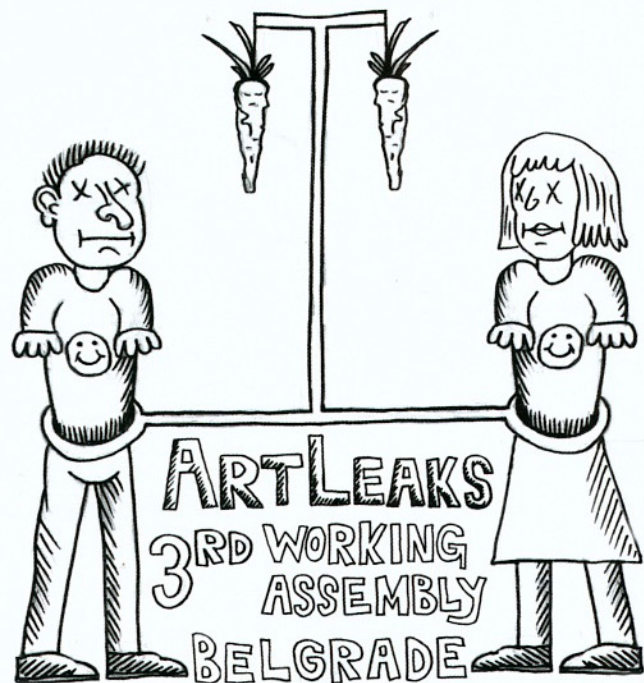
- Means for realization of an art work
- Remuneration for the work of artist
she promotes the scarcity of the conditions into a challenge (...) into chance to rethink social and economical position of the artist in the given reality. Basically, she gives honorarium and cancels the need to build/invest (material) into an art work. Is this one of the solutions? To cancel the materiality (and durability) of the art work?

Bureau of Melodramatic Research: This example is very interesting and it would be important to include it in ArtLeaks agenda, but we think it is not crucial to cancel investment in order refund artists fee. Example of Tonka Malekovic is relevant but concrete practice is always context related and ArtLeaks sees their role more as political actor then as a producer of alternative practices.

A potential strategy for such situations is to use the "No Fee Statement", developed by the Bureau of Melodramatic Research in collaboration with Paradis Garaj, which is available on our website. The document is a form to be filled in by representatives of both public and corporate funded institutions whenever the payment of an artist fee is denied. We encourage cultural workers to demand the managers of these institutions to take public responsibility for their financial policies, and make these forms available to the international cultural community and the media. On the other hand your example of Croatia is in a way similar to what is happening with the Romanian Cultural Institute at the moment, when artists are faced with the impossibility of getting remunerations they have earned through public contest (not because of restrictions in the budget distribution but because of government cuts altogether in the budget for culture). This shows once again that a struggle targeted solely towards the art world and art institution is not enough, an extended political solidarity is necessary, whereby cultural workers and other disenfranchised categories mobilize together to resist the neoliberal assault that we are confronted with.

- In order to grasp the market system too... what is Artleaks position towards the art market and do you think that artist (as a worker)'s rights are guaranteed by the contract one signs with a commercial gallery? As we know gallery contracts are often not so beneficiary for the artist as he/she is obliged to give away 50% or more (depends on the contract) to the Gallery even if he/she sells the work through other channels. On the other hand Gallery is not obliged in any sense to sell certain amount of your work. So, as someone noticed: basically you have obliged yourself to them but they have not done the same to you.

Stefan Tiron: ArtLeaks strives to achieve this, as fairness and justice are one of our founding goals. But at the same time, we need to take into account the fact that a sort of domino effect of exploitation happens down the chain. If we just secure artists' position and fail to address the condition of many others who perform unpaid labor, and who may endure even more abuse and humiliation, then we just scratch the surface of the inequalities in the contemporary art world. It is not just about these exclusive, linear contracts, but also non-contractual art sweatshop practices which directly affect different subaltern cultural workers. It is important to also consider the role of these "plain-artisans," who work in a nearly feudal relationship to blue-chip (or superstar) artists or their overlords. As we know, the art market is not constituted by just galleries and artists, but also by people who guard or move the works, clean the floors, do all sorts of unwaged or badly paid work inside cultural institutions. This exploitative landscape



AUGUST 31ST 2012, @ 7 PM, CULTRAL CENTER REX

extends into the "voluntariat": from unpaid translations to front-desk volunteers.

ArtLeaks held several conferences/meetings so far (Berlin, Moscow & Belgrade recently) where you were examining specific cultural contexts and certain cases of artists rights abuse submitted to your platform. Your aim is to create an international front of solidarity to struggle for cultural workers' rights. What are the next steps?

Corina L. Apostol: Some of our goals are to continue organizing these assemblies, workshops and on the ground investigations of different contexts around the world. Also, we plan to strengthen alliances with international groups with tangent concerns such as W.A.G.E., Arts&Labor, Occupy Museums, Haben und Brauchen, PWB, Critical Practice, Art & Economics Group. It is in this sense that we emphasize that only an internationally coordinated front of solidarity would be able to expose and denounce exploitation and censorship in contemporary culture, and collectively imagine new types of organizational articulations which would respond to the needs and desires of political subjects constituted at the crossing points of the current economic, politic and cultural transformations. Last but not least, we are very excited that we will be launching the ArtLeaks Gazette at the beginning of 2013. It will be a publication entirely dedicated to issues of censorship, cultural workers' rights and formulating and strategies of organizing cultural workers.